Chinese Migration to Ghana: Challenging the Orthodoxy on Characterizing Migrants and Reasons for Migration

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Abstract

While there is evidence that Chinese migration to Africa has increased in recent years, there is a general paucity of data on the total number of Chinese migrants living in African countries and their socio-demographic characteristics. The reasons for this situation include challenges associated with capturing immigrants in Africa censuses, lack of robust sampling frames to draw representative samples from immigrant populations, high level of irregular migration, and weak migrants tracking systems. Relying on qualitative data and quantitative survey, based on an innovative sampling technique, this paper examines the migration of Chinese migrants to Ghana. The findings challenge simplistic narratives that present the Chinese migrants as a homogenous group. Despite the general perception that Chinese migrants in Ghana are undocumented and lack higher education qualifications, our findings reveal that most Chinese migrants are highly educated persons with legal documentation. While the existing literature focuses on economic push and pull factors of migration to Ghana, the paper demonstrates the importance of social networks, economic potentials and peaceful environment in driving migration to Ghana. Based on these findings, we strongly recommend the need for an informed narrative on Chinese migration to Africa by governments, media, and academics to deal with the misconceptions and generalizations.

Keywords: Chinese, migration, characteristics of migrants, drivers of migration, Ghana

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Introduction

The migration of Chinese to Africa has generated significant interest in South-South migration literature in recent years (Cook et al., 2016; Wang & Zhan, 2019). Although the flow of Chinese migrants to Africa dates back to the 1960s, it has increased tremendously since 1990 in tandem with increased Chinese investment in African countries (Ho, 2008; Sun, 2014). Statistics on the total number of Chinese migrants living in Africa remain elusive (Merli et al., 2016). While recent estimates suggest that there are about one million Chinese migrants living in Africa (Siu & McGovern, 2017; Wang, 2022), data on the number of Chinese living in individual African countries is even more difficult to find. This situation is often attributed to multiplicity of factors, including weak labour markets and migration information systems, intractable challenges associated with conducting reliable population censuses in African countries, poor enforcement of immigration legislative instruments, porous borders and corruption, which facilitate irregular migration, and weak migrants tracking systems (Park, 2009; Merli et al., 2016). While African countries collect data on entry and exit of migrants at the main airports and borders, this data is hardly analysed to provide information on mobility patterns and characteristics of specific migrant populations (Awumbila et al., 2014).

In view of these data gaps, knowledge on the migration and characteristics of Chinese migrants in African countries is largely based on the findings of qualitative studies on Chinese communities in a few African countries (Merli et al., 2016). While previous studies on the Chinese presence in Africa focused on Chinese workers who migrate to African countries under formal labour contracts linked to Chinese government investment projects in Africa (Lee, 2009), few studies have focused on the migration and economic activities of the countless independent Chinese migrants whose

migration and operations are not linked to the Chinese state (Lin 2014; Cook et al., 2016). Studies that employ large quantitative dataset to examine the characteristics of Chinese in Africa, as a holistic group, and drivers of their migration are very few (Mohan et al., 2014; Wang, 2022), given the difficulties in gaining access to Chinese migrants for such studies. In many African countries, there is no reliable sampling frame for selecting Chinese immigrants for such studies. It is also quite difficult to obtain data from Chinese embassies or gain permission to study Chinese workers on certain project sites (Merli et al., 2016).

This paper relies on large quantitative data generated through an innovative sampling technique to examine the migration and characteristics of Chinese migrants in Ghana. The paper is important because although Chinese migration to Ghana dates back to the 1960s, the volume of migrant flow to Ghana has increased tremendously since 2000 partly because of increased volume of Chinese investments in Ghana (Sparreboom et al., 2018). The Chinese migrants work in various sectors, including construction, trade, mining, education, health, hospitality, and agriculture. Figures on Chinese migrants in Ghana are, however, largely unreliable due to weak statistical systems, high level of irregular entry through porous borders with other neighbouring countries and inability to enforce immigration laws (Aryee, 2015). While Mohan et al. (2014) estimated that Chinese migrant population in Ghana is between 7,000 and 20,000, sources at the Chinese Embassy in Ghana has recently reported that there are 30,000 Chinese in Ghana (Zurek, 2018).

In the absence of reliable data on the characteristics of Chinese, there has been several misconceptions and myths on the Chinese in Ghana. The literature suggests that early Chinese migrants in Ghana were largely single men who worked with Chinese construction firms or in Chinese-owned manufacturing factories (Ho, 2008). As the volume of the flow of migrants from

China to Ghana has increased tremendously since 2000, this characterisation may be rather too simplistic. Additionally, media narratives generally portray Chinese in Ghana as irregular migrants who are in the country for short-term economic gains through illicit trade or exploitation of natural resources. There is also little understanding of the reasons why Chinese migrants are increasingly moving to Ghana. Studies tend to focus on economic factors without analysing their interaction with the non-economic ones such as social networks and the desire to use migration to climb the social ladder (Wang, 2022). To help fill these gaps, this paper seeks to answer the following research questions: Who are the Chinese migrants in Ghana? What attracts Chinese migrants to Ghana? What is the role of push-pull factors and social networks in shaping migration flow from China to Ghana? Our findings challenge the simplistic narratives on the characteristics of the Chinese and their reasons for coming to Ghana. We argue that there are multiple economic and non-economic reasons for Chinese migration to Ghana.

Theorizing migration from China to Ghana

A review of the literature shows that a number of theories can be relied upon to explain migration from China to Ghana. Historically, migration has been explained largely from an economic perspective (see de Haas, 2008; Sinatti and Horst, 2015). One of the earliest economic based theories on migration is the Neo-Classical Economic Theory which posits that geographical differentials in wages cause people to migrate from labour-surplus, low wage regions to labour scarce, high wage regions. Neoclassical theorists (Harris and Todaro, 1970; Schiff, 1994) credit the individual as an independent rational actor who relies on reliable information to complete a tactical cost-benefit analysis and draws on his or her own agency in selecting a destination that maximises employment and earnings potential. This approach has been criticised for its wrong

assumption that the individual necessarily has access to accurate information about the destination (Deshingkar et al., 2019). This theory is not very appropriate for explaining migration flows from China to Ghana because wage levels in China are higher than Ghana, although profit levels in some sectors are higher in Ghana than China.

Another migration theory reviewed is the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) model (see Stark, 1991; Lucas, 2005) which broadens the theoretical basis for migration by focusing on the family/household as the most appropriate unit of analysis. It posits that households may send some of their members to another area as a way of diversifying risks and income sources (de Haas, 2008). While this approach is better suited to the developing country context where migration is a livelihood strategy that compensates for the lack of ready access to capital markets and insurance, it is not very appropriate for analysing migration from China to Ghana.

The 'Push-Pull' theory credited to Lee (1966), argues that migration between two areas is dependent on factors existing in the areas of origin and destination. The pull factors are the favourable conditions, which attract the migrant to the destination, while the push factors are the unfavourable conditions that drive people away from the origin (Teye et al., 2015). The theory assumes that apart from the push and pull factors, decision to migrate may be influenced by intervening obstacles that include long distances, legal constraints (e.g. immigration laws), cost of migration and psychological stress of leaving relatives behind. This theory is by far the most common theoretical approach adopted for explaining migration especially from sub-Saharan Africa (Adepoju, 2002; Bob-Milliar, 2012). De Haas (2008) is, however, particularly critical of the analytical and heuristic value of the push-pull models as they have the tendency of being ambiguous, non-specific and incapable of distinguishing between direct and indirect causes of migration. The push-pull theory also focuses less on non-economic drivers of migration, such as

social networks. Despite its limitations, it is possible to rely on this theory to examine how differentials in economic opportunities and natural resources between Ghana and China contribute to migration from China to Ghana.

Proponents of the social network theory (see Bourdieu 1985; Putnam 1995) argue that migration is driven by social ties or networks between potential migrants at the origin and current migrants at the destination. Networks in this context are defined as "sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community of origin" (Massey et al., 1993: 448). Migrants from the same origin community based at the destination are perceived to serve as what Böcker (1994) refers to as 'bridgeheads' with the capacity to reduce risks and the material and psychological costs of subsequent migration. Migrants are actors who are capable of drawing on both tangible and intangible resources. The role of actors across the different social fields (i.e. origin, transit and destination) in facilitating the concretisation of migration aspirations as well as overcoming the practical intervening obstacles to migration is critical to the realisation of migration journeys.

Our review of the literature shows that no single theory is capable of explaining migration from China to Ghana and as such, there is a need for theoretical triangulation. Consequently, we will adopt elements of the push-pull theory and the social networks theory for our analysis. While the push-pull theory will provide a framework for analysing the socio-economic drivers of migration from China to Ghana, the networks theory will provide a framework for assessing how exchange of information and ties between current migrants and potential migrants shape migration flows from China to Ghana.

Research Methods

In view of the weaknesses of dichotomous research approaches (see Castro et al., 2010; Teye, 2012), this study employed a mixed methods research design which entails a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantifiable data was generated through a questionnaire survey of 1268, of which 855 were males and the rest were females.

The survey was part of a multi-country survey implemented by the Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) project. The Ghana survey was implemented in the last quarter of 2020 and first quarter of 2021. Trained enumerators used Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) to collect data from Chinese migrants on a wide range of issues, including demographic characteristics, migration history, migration decision making processes working/living experiences in Ghana, interactions with family back in China, remitting behaviour and return migration intentions, among others.

While the MIDEQ Survey Coordinating Team has designed a robust probability sampling approach, country teams were expected to find innovative ways to deal with contextual challenges. An initial assessment by the Ghana team showed that national/household probabilistic sampling was not feasible in Ghana for sampling Chinese migrants. Time-space sampling was also not appropriate as there are no specific venues where the survey team will get Chinese migrants in sufficient numbers. Respondent-Driven-Sampling (RDS) sampling was not chosen due to resource constraints and ethical concerns. Consequently, a three-stage sampling design was used to select respondents, as follows: First, seven administrative regions were purposively selected for the study. These regions, which are known to have a significant number of Chinese immigrants, were Western, Central, Greater Accra, Volta, Eastern, Ashanti and Western North.

The sample comprised different subgroups (e.g. sectors, geographical sites, work onsite/offsite residence). We first conducted an exploratory exercise to map and list the Chinese migrants in each subgroup. Listing of Chinese immigrants was done at popular Chinese work places and investment project sites where enumerators were given access. The sampling frame list was stratified in terms of gender, sectors and positions. A simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents from different subgroups. To be eligible for participation in our survey, the respondent had to have stayed in Ghana for more than three months but not more than 20 years. The selected Chinese migrants were approached and interviewed. Additionally, snowball sampling strategy was combined with the simple random sampling from list of workers at workplaces. To enhance the robustness of snowballing, we used several nodes and limited the number of respondents from given networks to three respondents.

While different qualitative data collection techniques were also employed in this study to obtain data from a wide range of respondents, the qualitative data used to draft this specific paper were in-depth interviews with about 62 Chinese migrants, some of whom were managers of Chinese firms. The interviews were conducted on several themes, including migration history, occupation before moving to Ghana, and living experiences in Ghana.

The data generated were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis involved the use of STATA to generate simply cross tabulations and perform chi square tests on the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and outcome variables such as the use of social networks. Logistic regression analyses were also performed to examine the determinants of certain outcomes, such as the probability that a migrant contacted a network in Ghana before moving to Ghana.

Logistic Regression Models

This study estimates a logistic regression to explain the probability that a migrant contacted family or friends in Ghana before leaving China, using variables for before and after the actual migration as explanatory variables. It is assumed that such a behaviour of a migrant is determined by a computation of the benefits and cost. A measure of the benefits and cost is latent and not observed. The migrant is expected to make the contact if there is a gain to be made, that is when the net benefit, C*, is positive ($C^*_i>0$). We only observe a binary behaviour of contacting family or friends ($C_i=1$, when $C^*_i>0$) or not ($C_i=0$, when $C^*_i<0$).

A linear expression of the probability of contacting is written as follow:
$\Pr(C_i=1|Z) = Z\Omega + \epsilon_i$ ……..….(1)
Where Z represents all relevant determinants of the probability of contacting family or friends in Ghana before leaving China, Ω denotes all the parameter estimates and ϵ is the error term. A logistic model is used to estimate equation (1), where the dependent variable is a dummy which is equal to one if the migrant contacted family or friends in Ghana before leaving China and zero otherwise. Demographic variables like gender, marital status, education, and age categories are used as explanatory variables in addition to other post migration measures like sector of work, who manages finances in China and level of incomes earned in Ghana.

Results and Discussions

Who are the Chinese Migrants in Ghana?

We examined the characteristics of the Chinese migrants in Ghana in terms of gender, age, duration of stay, marital status, level of education, sectors of work and legal status in Ghana. While the early literature suggests that Chinese migrants in Ghana are generally young, unmarried males (Ho, 2008), we found that increasing number of females are actually migrating to Ghana, although

there are still more males than females. As indicated already, 67% of our sample were men with the remaining 33% being females. Many of the migrants in the hospitality sector as well as administrators and language translators of Chinese construction companies are mainly females, as indicated in the statement below by a Chinese:

> *In the past when our people [Chinese] were mainly working in the construction sector, only a few Chinese women came to Ghana, and they were engaging in trading. Today, we recruit both men and women from China for our work here. Those managing restaurants and hotels bring more ladies because the work we do are generally for women…. Even in the manufacturing and construction [sectors], we have Chinese women working as managers and also helping with language translation (GHGPm28).*

The distribution of the age categories of the Chinese respondents are presented in Table 1. It is clear from the table that a majority of the Chinese migrants (43.2%) are in the 26-35 years age groups. While this distribution is partly in line with the literature which indicates that Chinese migrants are mainly in the youthful age group (Aryee, 2015), the proportion of migrants aged more than 40 years is quite high (27.9%). There were a few Chinese aged citizens still living in Ghana, contrary to the narrative that suggest only the youth stay in Ghana. For instance, GHGPm2, who came to Ghana to work and was doing very well later brought his 62-year-old mother to come and live with them in Ghana. There are gendered differentials in the distribution of ages. Females are relatively younger than the males, resulting in a significant difference in the distribution of the age categories between males and females ($X^2 = 62.0084$, P value = 0.000). For instance, 19.9 percent of females and 8.3 percent of males are in the age bracket 16-25 years. Similarly, 25.3 percent of females and 19.7 percent of males are between the ages of 26 and 30 years. On the contrary, there are generally more male respondents than female respondents in the older age categories (i.e., from 36-40 years and above) with the exception of 56-60 years.

Table 1: Age distribution of Chinese respondents

Age in years	Male		Female		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
16-25	69	8.3	79	19.9	148	12.1
26-30	163	19.7	100	25.3	263	21.5
31-35	178	21.5	87	22	265	21.7
36-40	150	18.1	57	14.4	207	16.9
41-45	129	15.6	29	7.3	158	12.9
46-50	73	8.8	16	4	89	7.3
51-55	42	5.1	15	3.8	57	4.7
56-60	11	1.3	7	1.8	18	1.5
Above 60	12	1.5	6	1.5	18	1.5
Total	827	100	396	100	1223	100

$X^2 = 62.0084 = 62.0084$, Pr = 0.000

Similarly, while media narratives suggest that Chinese are short-term migrants who are in Ghana to exploit natural resources, our analysis indicates that this characterization is simplistic, as an increasing number of Chinese in many of the major sectors are staying longer. While nearly half (49.5%) of Chinese migrants had been in Ghana for between one and five years, about 27 per cent of them had been in Ghana for between five and ten years. Another 12.6 per cent of Chinese respondents had been in Ghana for between ten and twenty years. While the literature suggests that construction workers stay shortly in Ghana (Ho, 2008), some of them are remaining longer by switching to work in the mining or trade sectors when their contracts are over.

Some construction workers also go to China shortly and come back to Ghana to work in a different sector, as shown in the statement below by a mining worker:

> *I was brought to Ghana by a construction company in 2007. We worked for 3 years to complete a road and we were supposed to go to China. I went back to China for just one month and came back to join my friends who were doing some gold businesses here. The money is more than what I got from the construction (GHGPm61).*

As shown in Figure 1, the marital status of Chinese respondents is also quite gendered. Higher percentages of the females were observed in respondents who were single or never married (43.2% for females and 37.8% for males), separated (2.9% for females and 1.4% for males), divorced (2.7% for females and 2.3% for males) and widowed (3.6% for females and 1.3% for males). Thus, a higher proportion of the males are in some form of marriage or cohabitation as compared to the females (57.2% for males and 47.6% for females). The findings suggest that the orthodox narratives, which present Chinese migrants as being mainly single/unmarried men (Aryee, 2015), may be a misrepresentation of the current profile. This finding may be related to age distribution as many of the Chinese are older than presented in the literature.

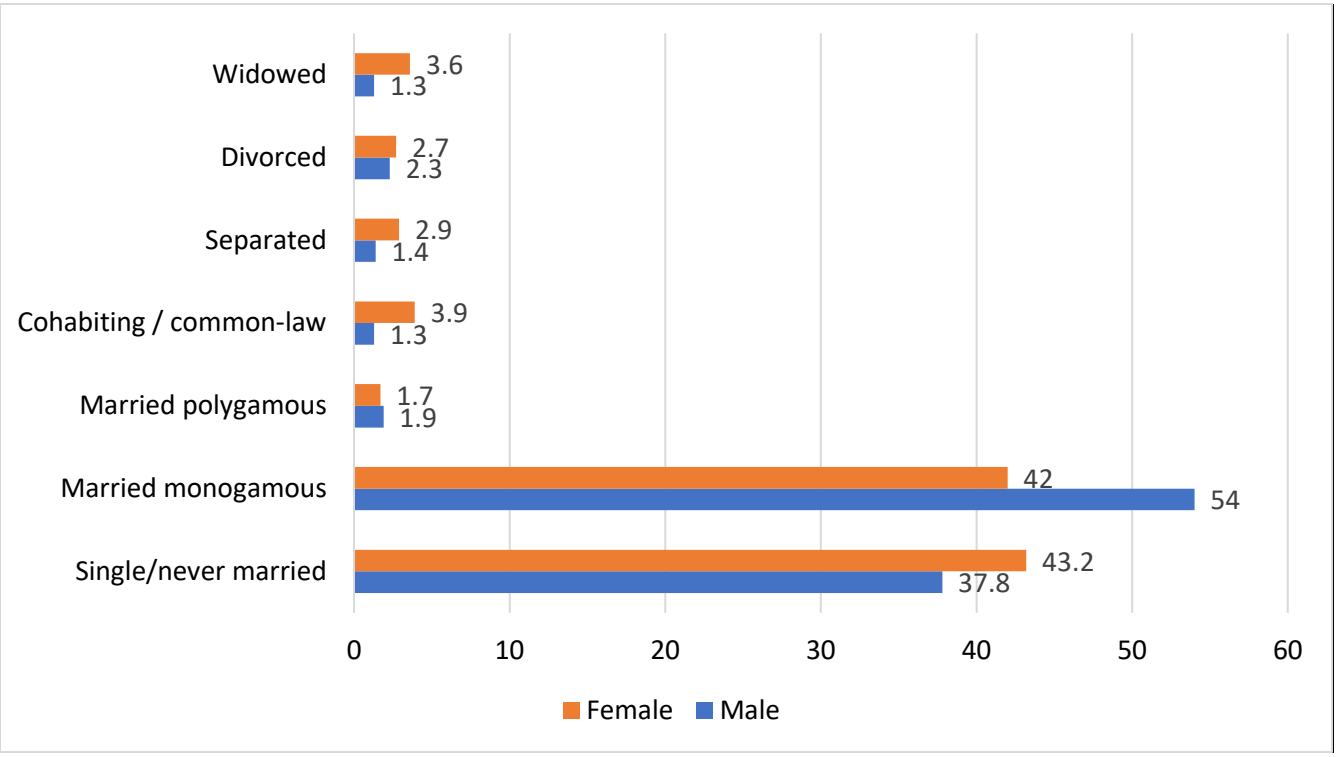

Figure 1: Marital status of Chinese respondents

The distribution of Chinese respondents by level of education clearly shows that the narratives in the Ghanaian media that suggest Chinese migrants are generally people with low educational qualifications are not supported by data. Indeed, as shown in Table 2, only 4% of the Chinese migrants have never had any form of secondary/vocational education. About 52 percent of the Chinese migrants have completed or had some form of post-secondary education. About 13.7% have completed or had some form of graduate school experience. A chi square test indicates that there are clear gendered differentials in educational levels ($X^2 = 40.4452$ $P = 0.000$). As shown in Table 2, females were more likely to be found in the lower end of the educational ladder. In fact while only 3.3 percent of men have not reached secondary school, 5.9 percent of females have not had any secondary education. A higher percentage of males completed post-secondary or university (30.3% for males and 22.6% for females). In terms of completing vocational/technical

education, the proportion of males is higher than the proportion of females (15.2% for males and 8% for females). However, at the very high end of the educational ladder, about 17 percent of females had completed or done some graduate school education as compared to 12 percent of the males. Many of the females with very high education were managers of Chinese businesses or language interpreters.

Table 2: Distribution of Chinese by highest level of schooling completed

Education	Male	Female	All
No formal education	0.5	1	0.6
Some primary school	1.1	1.7	1.3
Completed primary school	1.7	3.2	2.1
Some secondary school	5.8	4.1	5.2
Completed secondary school	20.2	25.1	21.8
Some post-secondary /university	9.1	13.6	10.6
Completed post-secondary /university	30.3	22.6	27.8
Some technical/Vocational School	4.1	3.6	4
Completed technical/Vocational School	15.2	8	12.9
Some graduate school	2.7	5.4	3.6
Completed graduate school	9.3	11.7	10.1
Total	100(847)	100(411)	100(1258)

X^2= 40.4452, Pr = 0.000

The Chinese in Ghana generally work in various sectors of the economy. As shown in Table 3, the major sectors where our respondents work include, wholesale or retail trade (20.6%), construction, demolition or site preparation (13.5%), manufacturing (12.6%), accommodation and food (10%) mining (9.7%), education and healthcare activities (7.5%), and agriculture (5.9%). There are significant differences in the distributions for males and females across various sectors (X^2=

251.7172, Pr = 0.000). For instance, a higher proportion of females (28.1%) work in the wholesale and retail sector than males (17%). Those in the trade sectors tend to trade in textiles, electrical appliances, medicines, agricultural products and food items (Aryee, 2015). Similarly, the proportion of females working in the accommodation or food services sector (19.2%) is higher than the proportion males working in the same sector (5.6%). Females also had a higher concentration in the education or healthcare sectors (17.2% for females and 2.9% for males). These sectors provide services considered as women domain. Chinese in these female-dominated sectors (i.e., wholesale and retail trading, accommodation and food services, and education/health services) sectors are generally not linked to their government's investments projects.

On the other hand, the proportion of males who work in the construction sector is higher (18%) than the proportion of females (4.2%) who work in the same sector. Our findings on the profile of Chinese in the construction sector support the literature which indicates that many of them are highly-skilled or low-skilled single men who work for Chinese firms involved in the construction of roads, buildings, hydropower plants, railroad and telecommunications networks (Cook et al., 2016; Sparreboom et al., 2018). Males also dominate the mining sector, with 13.3 percent of them in the mining sector as compared to just 2 percent of the females in the sector. The proportion of males working in the agricultural sector is higher (6.4%) than the proportion of females working in the same sector (4.7%). These migrants are involved in the production, processing and distribution of agricultural products (Cook et al., 2016).

Table 3: Sector of main work by gender

Sector	Male	Female	All
Agriculture, forestry or fishing	6.4	4.7	5.9
Wholesale or retail trade	17	28.1	20.6
Construction, demolition or site preparation	18	4.2	13.5
Manufacture or repair products	15.7	6	12.6
Accommodation or food services	5.6	19.2	10.0
Mining	13.3	2	9.7
Education or healthcare activities	2.9	17.2	7.5
Office administration or support activities	3.1	4.5	3.5
Infrastructure related (water, electricity)	3.9	0.2	2.7
Other	14.1	13.9	14.1
Total	100 (841)	100 (402)	100 (1243)

X^2= 251.7172 Pr = 0.000

Given the popular media narratives, which suggest that many of the Chinese migrants in Ghana are undocumented, we examined the legal status of the respondents (Table 4). While care must be taken in interpreting this data as some migrants may provide false statements on their legal status, most of the respondents had work visas (71.2% for males and 55% for females). The chi square test shows that there are gendered differentials in the legal status (X^2= 78.4582 Pr = 0.000). Higher proportions of females had business visa (10.3% for females and 8.5% for males), student visa (8.3% for females and 2.8% for males) and family visas (10.1% for females and 1.5% for males). About 14.4 percent of the males had residence permits as compared to 12.7 percent of females. Only 1.5% of males and 2.8% of females indicated that their visas have expired.

Table 4: Current legal (immigration) status in Ghana by gender

Legal Status	Male	Female	Total
Citizenship	0.1	0.8	0.3
Work Visa	71.2	55.0	65.9
Business Visa	8.5	10.3	9.1
Student Visa	2.8	8.3	4.6
Family Visa	1.5	10.1	4.3
Residence permit	14.4	12.7	13.8
Expired visa/overstay	1.5	2.8	2.0
Total	100.0(791)	100.0(387)	100.0(1178)

X^2= 78.4582 Pr = 0.000

Reasons for Migrating from China to Ghana

Our data clearly shows that a multiplicity of factors contribute to migration of Chinese to Ghana. First political and economic changes in China is said to give Chinese firms competitive advantage which in turn encourage migration of entrepreneurs to African countries including Ghana. More specifically, as part of the economic and political changes, Chinese entrepreneurs are able to access loans for investments in Africa (Wang, 2022: 2).

Apart from these changes, there were a number of push-pull factors which serve as drivers of migration from China. Consistent with the literature, some migrants only talked about the push factors while others compared both the push and pull factors (Baum, 2012). For instance, low earnings and high cost of living in China pushed some of its national to Ghana and other African countries. One of the male Chinese immigrants, GHGPm23, explained that, in 2003, he migrated to Ghana because although he was working with a company in China, the salary was not enough to take care of him and his household. He discussed with his brother who was already living in

Ghana and the brother outlined the opportunities in the trade sector in Ghana compared to China. He was given the option of selling quality products like electricals because most Chinese friends in Ghana complained about inferior electrical products on the market. Since he already had experience in electrical products, his brother was willing to help him set up his own electrical company once he managed to arrive in Ghana. He discussed the idea with his wife who gave her support to migrate to Ghana. Another respondent also narrated the high cost of living in China as the main reason for leaving there and coming to Ghana in the following sentences:

> *In China, the cost of living is expensive and we work very hard there. We work for twelve hours, which is difficult but when I came to Ghana, working here is not really difficult and I can also make money that is why I came here (GHGPm28).*

The statement above demonstrates how some respondents consider both the push and pull factors in taking migration decisions (Lee, 1966). Some of the entrepreneurs were also pushed out of China by difficulties in moving upward on the social ladder. The migrants explained that while they were not very poor in China, it was more difficult to improve their social status, as they needed to compete with more established firms. They were not highly respected because of their low business profile. In contrast, there are more opportunities in Ghana, and they can start with a small investment and rise faster due to higher returns. A male Chinese narrated how migration to Ghana to do gold business has changed his fortunes and status within a short time:

> *In China, the market is controlled by big firms so small businesses don't make much profit. I heard that there is more profits in Ghana. So, I moved here to start gold business. Now I am highly respected here and if I go back to China, my friends respect me more because of the things I am doing with the money from Ghana, That feeling makes me happy in Ghana (GHGPm21).*

As Wang (2022:2) has noted, the Chinese migrants, in this case, view "the fairer opportunity structure and more flexible space for career and identity transitions" as a very important reason to move to Ghana.

As can be seen in Table 5, the data clearly shows that, for majority of the respondents, the attractive factors were more prominent in pulling them to Ghana than push factors in China. The major reason why they migrated to Ghana was because of the better job opportunities/wages in Ghana. This was mentioned by 59.7 % of migrants. Males were more likely to be attracted by such opportunities in Ghana than females (65% for males and 48.7% for females). As mentioned already, opportunities and higher profits in the mining sector were particularly attractive to migrants. This is captured in the statement below:

> *I migrated based on the conversations I had with some close relatives and friends. My final decision was out of a conversation with a friend who was already in Ghana and works in the mining sector. He told me about the opportunities in the mining sector because he knew my interest to establish my own business dating back to when we were still in college. After the lengthy conversation with him, I decided to ask my dad who once stayed in Ghana and work in the same sector. My dad suggested this business to me and was ready to help me to establish the business. He journeyed with me to Ghana and with the help of my friend, we got a place to establish the business. We found out the need to start such a business in the Western region because this is one of the hubs of Gold mining in Ghana. I decided to do business in that region in Ghana upon discussion with my wife, my father, and my very good friend (GHGPm21).*

While some migrated to come and start a new business, a related economic reason why some migrated was job transfer to new company subsidiaries, as highlighted in the statement below:

> *I was a sales manager in this same company in China. So, when the company decided to open a new branch here in Ghana, I was asked to come and manage it. This company has its headquarters in China. It is a manufacturing company in China that also produces batteries. My boss had a friend handling sale for the company as an agent in Angola. I went there in 2010 and stayed there for almost three months to observe the market. I saw we could get many markets in Africa, and the company decided to have a wholesale company in West Africa. Thus, we checked and compared many different countries, and we selected three of them. We discussed further and finally selected Ghana (GHGPm16)*

Another respondent captured how his migration to Ghana was related to job transfer in the following sentence:

> *I came to Ghana to work. The construction company I was working for in China won a contract here in Ghana, and some of us were sent here to execute that project. That was in 2002. After the first contract, the company won several other contracts from the Ghana government. So, the company extended our permit for us to stay in Ghana to work on the new projects. That is why I moved to several places in Ghana (GHGPm17).*

The above cases highlight the importance of economic changes which has given Chinese firms advantage in expanding their businesses to Africa (Mohan, 2014; Wang, 2022). Other Chinese immigrants who work in the construction and mining sectors migrated to Ghana to work for Chinese companies in the construction sector.

Another important pull factor that attracted Chinese to Ghana was the perception that Ghana is a safer country, which was mentioned by 38.8% of the respondents. Chinese migrants perceive Ghana as an oasis of peace in a sub-region that is characterized by several political upheavals including coup d'états in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso, civil unrests, and anti-immigrant sentiments. The use of subjective references such as 'nice', 'respectful', 'hospitable', 'accommodating' and 'peaceful' to describe Ghanaians paint a picture of a malleable population in the minds of aspiring migrants. Some respondents compared various African countries as potential destinations and chose Ghana because it is peaceful. GHGPm39, for instance, migrated to Ghana because he felt Ghana was most peaceful. He said:

> *I applied to a company, and I was offered a two-year renewable job. I was posted to Lagos, Nigeria in 2012 but due to the high level of insecurity in Nigeria, I terminated the contract after the first year and moved to Ghana in 2013 (GHGPm39).*

This highlights the importance of non-economic pull factors in attracting people to Ghana. The third most important pull factor identified as their main reasons for immigrating to Ghana was

social networks. About 23.2% of males and 43.3 percent of females migrated to Ghana because they had family/friends in Ghana. The data shows females were more likely to rely on social networks for migration. One of the Chinese female immigrants explained her reasons for migrating to Ghana as:

> *I came with only my child to Ghana because my husband was already here, and it was time to join him. When I gave birth, my salary was no longer enough for us. My husband was the one sending money to us every month. So, we decided that it would be wise to live together in one place and to help our child grow (GHGPm12).*

Some male migrants also reported that they received information on Ghana from friends and families. Our finding highlights the importance of social networks which have already been identified as major facilitating drivers of Chinese migration to Africa (Mohan and Kale 2007). As will be discussed later, migrants depend on social networks for information and other services prior to arrival (see also Flahaux and De Haas, 2016). The low cost of moving to Ghana was also mentioned by about 10.3 percent of males and about 9.4 percent of females as another reason for moving to Ghana. In fact, established networks may lower transaction costs for businesses as well any risk that comes along with new arrivals. Another reason mentioned was how easy it is to access Ghana in terms of the geography and favourable migration policy (9.7% of males and 6.8% of females). A reason with a significant gender difference is coming to Ghana because of better educational opportunities in Ghana. While about 9 percent of females mentioned this reason, only about 3.9 percent of males mentioned this reason. Two other prominent reasons with no significant gender difference are coming on the advice of a recruiter (8.4% of males and 6.5% of females) and being brought to Ghana by others (without a choice, 5.7% of males and 6.8% of females).

Table 5: Reasons for migration to Ghana by gender (multiple response)

	Male		Female		All	
Why did you migrate to Ghana versus any other country?	Frequency	Percent of cases	Frequency	Percent of cases	Frequency	Percent of cases
Better job opportunities /wage in Ghana	556	65.0	201	48.7	757	59.7
Ghana is safe(r)	331	38.7	161	39.0	492	38.8
Had family/friends in Ghana	198	23.2	179	43.3	377	29.7
Low cost of moving to Ghana	88	10.3	39	9.4	127	10.0
Easy to access Ghana (geography, migration policy)	83	9.7	28	6.8	111	8.8
Other	74	8.7	31	7.5	105	8.3
Advised by recruiter	72	8.4	27	6.5	99	7.8
I was brought here (not choice)	49	5.7	28	6.8	77	6.1
Better education opportunities in Ghana	33	3.9	37	9.0	70	5.5

Analysing the role of social networks in facilitating migration from China to Ghana

Consistent with the literature which indicates that social networks have the potential to guarantee the self-perpetuation of migration once triggered (Massey et al., 1993), Chinese migrants in Ghana draw on both strong and weak ties towards the facilitation of their migration. A majority of Chinese migrants surveyed and interviewed rely on familial relations for information about the destination country (Ghana) which informs the formation of their migration aspirations. Information on political stability, reception of the local population to the participation of migrants in the labour market as well as investment opportunities and repatriation of profits is provided by siblings, parents and extended family members who either reside in or have the experience of migrating to Ghana previously. From the survey data (see Table 6), about 24.2 percent of males and 29 percent of females relied on information from family or relatives in China while about 21.1 percent of

males and 44 percent of females relied on information from family or relatives in Ghana. The information from family in China was equally important for both male and female migrants but information from family in Ghana was more important for female migrants than for male migrants (a difference which is statistically significant).

Table 6: Source of migration information by gender (multiple response)

Source of information or advise on migration before leaving China	Male		Female		All	
	Frequency	Percent of cases	Frequency	Percent of cases	Frequency	Percent of cases
Family / relatives in Ghana	180	21.1	181	43.8	361	28.5
Family / relatives in China	207	24.2	118	28.6	325	25.6
Friend, community members in Ghana	150	17.5	49	11.9	199	15.7
Past or current migrants in Ghana	149	17.4	47	11.4	196	15.5
Friend, community members in China	145	17	44	10.7	189	14.9
Past or current migrants in China	112	13.1	36	8.7	148	11.7
Formal private agent/agency or recruiter in China	101	11.8	40	9.7	141	11.1
No one / myself	100	11.7	36	8.7	136	10.7
Formal private agent/agency or recruiter in Ghana	68	8	15	3.6	83	6.6

Family reunion is anchored on information from strong social ties. GHGPm07 migrated to Ghana based on assurances provided by her husband who was already domiciled in Ghana:

> *I came to Ghana to join my husband to raise our children together as one family. Secondly, my husband's testimony about Ghana being a peaceful country with many job opportunities in the trade sector is another reason I came. I was interested in Ghana because I knew I would find a business when I came. The hospitable nature of the people and the conducive business environment attracted me to Ghana apart from joining my husband. I had this information from my husband, so I believed it (GHGPm07).*

Similarly, GHGPm12 whose husband was already based in Ghana for four years was supported with all the documents she needed to apply for a visa under the family reunion category in 2015. Apart from spouses, other migrants such as GHGPm23 relied on siblings to obtain relevant support that others received from their spouses.

Beyond close familial relations, aspiring Chinese migrants also rely on information from friends and friends of friends to make their migration decisions. For instance, GHGPm05 who specializes in the construction of boreholes, water treatment, and pump installation for both individuals and companies, notes that a friend was instrumental in ensuring that he was well informed about what to expect prior to his arrival in Ghana:

> *Before I came, my friend told me more about Ghana, the people, and what I should expect. He made mention of the hot weather and food… The information I received from my friend helped me in making preparations to move here (GHGPm05).*

Beyond the general sharing of information on the destination country, social networks also provide targeted information on specific business and investment opportunities for aspiring Chinese migrants who mainly migrate to Ghana for economic reasons.

The mining and trade sectors are particularly popular with Chinese migrants to Ghana:

> *Yes, I migrated with some friends and extended family members. I have longed to travel outside China but contemplated where to go until my friend convinced me about Ghana. I heard about the booming gold business in Ghana. So, we planned and joined resources together and came to Ghana (GHGPm14)*

Social networks were also relied upon for visa application and funding the cost of migration.

Friends and family members who have migration experiences also provide guidance on visa application processes. GHGPm04, who sells electrical products on a retail basis in Okaishie, Accra (Ghana), describes how a friend provided her with all the necessary guidance on which documents to present as well as how to respond to questions that are asked by visa clearance officers:

> *My friend gave me some details about Ghana, likely questions the immigration officers would ask, and travel documents they would require, including the purpose of the visit, where you will be staying with addressees, etc. These things helped me get a fair idea of what I should expect. It helped me pick the right documents, including my passport, booking details for my hotel, and financial statement (GHGPm04).*

Some migrants rely on both kinship social ties to prepare and fund migration to Ghana. GHGPm18 who is a fifty-six-year-old, did not use any recruitment agencies/agents but rather relied on his uncle.

> *No, please, I did not rely on any recruitment agencies. My uncle helped me to go through all the processes easily because he had helped many people to travel to Africa. My uncle was the one who guided me through what to do, where to go, among other things. He helped me to arrive in Ghana without any difficulties (GHGPm18)*

GHGPm18's uncle financed his migration to Ghana without requesting for a refund, as he would normally do to others. In addition to his savings, his uncle provided cash to cover the cost of his migration. In turn, GHGPm18 supported his uncle to run his business in Ghana. As such, a job was waiting for GHGPm18 because his uncle was already in the mining business in Ghana. GHGPm18 was made a supervisor of his uncle's company

Determinants of propensity to contact family members and friends in Ghana before migrating

In order to find out which migrants made use of social networks, a logistic regression is estimated to explain the probability that a migrant contacted family or friends in Ghana before leaving China. Pre and post departure variables have been used to explain the behaviour. The gender of the respondent does not explain the probability that a migrant contacted family or friends. The coefficient of the marital status is significant at ten percent level of significance, implying that those married are more likely to contact their family and friends as compared to those not married (about 75 percent higher odds). The odds of contacting friends in Ghana before leaving China for migrants who did not finish secondary education is about 2.5 (1/0.4) times the odds of trying to contact friends by migrants who finished vocational or technical or some of it. The results show that in cases where the spouse manages finances in China after the migration, the migrant was less likely to contact family and friends before moving as compared to all the other options of finance management. This may be explained by the fact that people who manage finances may have the resources to embark on migration without depending on contacts in Ghana.

From the results, the odds of contacting family in Ghana when the migrant knew relatives in Ghana before leaving China was ten times the odds of contacting them when there was no relative to contact. Also, the odds of contacting family/friends in Ghana before leaving China for migrants with friends is about 16 times the odds of trying to contact friends when there was none. Controlling for these two variables is important, so that the interpretation of the coefficients of the other variables could be made under the assumption that [whether] a migrant has family or friends in Ghana is held constant. The findings show that if a migrant has no family or friends in Ghana, then there would not be the opportunity of trying to contact them.

One surprising result is that all the industrial dummies have negative coefficients with agriculture as the base category, even though only two are statistically significant at five percent level. The odds of contacting family or friends in Ghana for migrants working in the Agricultural sector were 3.6 times the odds of such behaviour for migrants working in the construction sector. This may be explained by the fact that unlike the construction sector where many migrants are helped to migrate to Ghana by the construction firms, migrants intending to work in the agriculture sector are largely independent migrants who may need assistance to acquire land and settle in Ghana. The coefficient of the dummy for all other sectors is also significant at one percent level. None of the dummies for age categories is statistically significant even though they are all positive except for the above 50 years category. The odds of contacting family or friends in Ghana is about 85 percent higher for migrants with high income as compared to those with low incomes, holding all other relevant factors constant (significant only at 10 percent level, p value is 0.068). The coefficient for moderate income is positive while that of very high income is negative (signifying a probable nonlinear relationship) but both are not statistically significant.

Table 7: Logistic regression of migrants who contacted family or friends in Ghana before leaving China.

Logistic regression-Contacted family or friends in Ghana before leaving China (=1, zero otherwise)						
Variables	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	Z	P>z	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Male respondent (female=0 as base)	1.372	0.356	1.22	0.222	0.826	2.281
Married (not married is base)	1.75	0.53	1.85	0.064	0.967	3.167
Education of respondent: base= less than Secondary education						
Finished secondary schooling or some post-secondary	0.904	0.394	-0.23	0.817	0.385	2.124
Finished post-secondary/university schooling	0.808	0.371	-0.46	0.643	0.329	1.985
Finished vocational, technical or some of it	0.400	0.178	-2.06	0.040	0.167	0.957
Finished graduate school or some of it	0.734	0.378	-0.60	0.549	0.267	2.016
Management of household finances in China: Base=all others						
Spouse manages finances in China	0.353	0.14	-2.62	0.009	0.162	0.769
Father manages finances in China	0.725	0.235	-0.99	0.322	0.384	1.369
Mother manages finances in China	1.142	0.419	0.36	0.718	0.556	2.344
Knew nobody in Ghana before leaving China (otherwise zero)	0.683	0.285	-0.92	0.36	0.302	1.545
Knew relatives in Ghana before leaving China (otherwise zero)	10.65	4.722	5.34	0.000	4.469	25.4
Knew friends in Ghana before leaving China (otherwise zero)	16.03	6.387	6.96	0.000	7.34	35
Knew an employer in Ghana before leaving China (otherwise zero)	1.225	0.462	0.54	0.591	0.585	2.564
Sector of employment: Agriculture, forestry or fishing is base						
Manufacture or repair products	0.612	0.366	-0.82	0.412	0.19	1.977
Infrastructure related (water, electricity)	0.633	0.512	-0.57	0.572	0.13	3.085
Construction, demolition or site preparation	0.277	0.16	-2.22	0.026	0.089	0.859
Wholesale or retail trade	0.356	0.205	-1.8	0.072	0.116	1.098
Accommodation or food services	0.523	0.307	-1.1	0.269	0.166	1.652
Education or healthcare activities	0.332	0.2	-1.83	0.068	0.102	1.084
Office administration or support activities	0.563	0.4	-0.81	0.419	0.14	2.267
Mining	0.457	0.288	-1.24	0.213	0.133	1.569
Others	0.189	0.109	-2.89	0.004	0.061	0.586
Age of respondent: 16 - 25 years is base						
26-30	1.017	0.357	0.05	0.961	0.512	2.022
31-35	1.369	0.51	0.84	0.398	0.66	2.84
36-40	1.615	0.783	0.99	0.323	0.624	4.176
41-45	1.372	0.687	0.63	0.527	0.515	3.659
46-50	1.041	0.62	0.07	0.946	0.324	3.344
Above 50	0.882	0.498	-0.22	0.825	0.292	2.67
Income: Low is base						
Moderate	1.438	0.497	1.05	0.294	0.73	2.831
High	1.849	0.623	1.83	0.068	0.956	3.578
Very high	0.735	0.257	-0.88	0.378	0.37	1.459
Constant	1.698	1.329	0.68	0.498	0.367	7.869
Number of observations			779			
Pseudo R2			0.3438			

Concluding Remarks

This paper has demonstrated that the dominant orthodoxy in the literature about Chinese in Africa needs more nuanced empirical evidence to bring corrective arguments that reflect current situations that are devoid of popular perceptions and discriminations. The characteristics of Chinese migrants in Ghana are almost typical of the normal migrant globally. While the orthodox literature portrays Chinese migrants as a homogenous group of largely young males who work with Chinese construction firms or in Chinese manufacturing factories (Bo, 2018), our findings indicate that there has been an evolution of migrant characteristics from male-dominated and state-propelled to individual independent migrants of all ages and gender distributed in all sectors of the economy. Following the work of Sullivan & Cheng (2018: 1176), we argue that popular narratives on Chinese in Ghana mask "substantial diversity across Chinese people" living in the country. Interestingly, the push factors identified in the China-Ghana migration story inverts the common logic of pull factors, especially economic ones, in deciding whether a movement takes place or not. The case of China being saturated with lesser opportunity for smaller players compared to a lesser developed country with multiple opportunities but lowcapital availability for its citizens creates a vacuum to be filled by Chinese whose state prioritizes investments outside their boundaries. Besides the deeper role played by the Chinese government in facilitating trade, movement, and making capital easily available for its citizens, family and friends also play significant roles in facilitating movements from China to Ghana. The paper argues strongly against the old narratives that have poor empirical groundings and in some instances influenced by their a priori knowledge, propaganda and unacademic perceptions.

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